R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SOCIAL DESIRABILITY VARIABLE AND PERSONALITY VARIABLES.

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REPORT NUMBER BR-6-8494 PUB DATE 67
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.48 12P.

DESCRIPTORS- AMERICAN CULTURE, BENGALI, HINDI, *PERSONALITY STUDIES, *COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS, *PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT, SELF CONCEPT, *CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, COLLEGE STUDENTS, *SOCIAL ATTITUDES, EDWARDS PERSONAL PREFERENCE SCHEDULE (EPPS), BURLINGTON, INDIA

AN EFFORT WAS MADE TO MEASURE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE OBSERVED DIFFERENCES IN THE PERSONALITY STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS IN INDIA MIGHT HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN A SOCIAL DESIRABILITY SET DERIVED FROM THE EDWARDS PERSONAL PREFERENCE SCHEDULE (EPPS). EIGHT HYPOTHESES WERE TESTED ON 243 AMERICAN LIBERAL ARTS UNDERGRADUATE FEMALES AND 258 FROM TWO LINGUISTIC REGIONS (HINDI AND BENGALI) OF INDIA. RESULTS SHOWED THAT SOCIAL DESIRABILITY SCALE VALUES OF PERSONALITY STATEMENTS WERE POSITIVELY AND SIGNIFICANTLY RELATED NOT ONLY ACROSS TWO DISTINCT LINGUISTIC REGIONS OF INDIA BUT ALSO ACROSS THE AMERICAN AND INDIAN CULTURES. IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT PERSONALITY TESTS IN WHICH VARIOUS RESPONSE SETS HAVE BEEN PURPOSELY CONTROLLED MAY PROVE TO BE USEFUL IN THE OBJECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF PERSONALITY. (GD)

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Project No. 6-8494

by

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The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education.

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PROBLEM

Previous research by the investigator (6,7) has shown systematic and significant differences between college students from the U. S. A. and India on several of the need variables as measured by the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (4). As there is a high positive correlation between the frequency of endorsement of personality statements and the social desirability scale values of the statements, the present study was undertaken to determine the extent to which the observed differences in personality structure might have been affected by the cross-cultural differences in social desirability response set. The following hypotheses about the social desirability variable and its relationship with the personality variables were investigated.

(Null) Hypothesis I — That there is no relationship between social desirability scale values of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) statements of subjects from two distinct linguistic regions of India.

(Null) Hypothesis II — That there is no relationship between the social desirability scale values of the EPPS statements of college students from the U. S. A. and India.

Note:

1. Portions of this report will be presented at the Eastern Psychological Association meeting in Boston, Mass., April 6-8, 1967.
2. The research was performed when the investigator was at the University of Vermont. He is now with the Department of Psychology, University of New Hampshire, Durham, N. H.

Hypothesis III That neither the subjects from the U. S. A. nor from India have a systematic position preference for either the A or B members of the AB pairs of EPPS statements.

Hypothesis IV That there is no relationship between the frequency of endorsement of EPPS items and the judged social desirability scale values of the items for American subjects.

Hypothesis V That there is no relationship between the frequency of endorsement of EEPS items and the judged social desirability scale values of the items for Indian subjects.

Hypothesis VI That there is no relationship between independent test measures of social desirability and EPPS variables for American subjects.

Hypothesis VII That there is no relationship between independent test measures of social desirability and EPPS variables for Indian subjects.

Hypothesis VIII That the relationships between independent measures of social desirability and the EPPS variables, if significant, would be similar across the two cultures.

SUBJECTS AND PROCEDURES

a. Subjects:

The subjects consisted of liberal arts undergraduate females, 243 from the University of Vermont, U. S. A. and 258 from two universities located in two linguistic regions (Hindi and Bengali) of India. Only 41 subjects of the total 258 were Bengali's. The number of subjects used in each analysis varied with the hypothesis under investigation. All of the subjects were between 16 to 25 years of age.

Both the American and Indian subjects were largely of urban middle-class socio-economic backgrounds. All of the Indian subjects understood English having studied it regularly for a period of six to twelve years.

Random sampling procedures were employed in the selection of samples for the various analyses. Samples were also matched in terms of size, age and sex.

b. Procedure:

Most of the data were collected by the investigator. A set of 42 statements from the original list of 140 statements used in the development of EPPS was used in this study. Detailed information regarding these statements is given in Messick (10). The 42 statements were rated for social desirability be 45 American subjects and 78 Indian subjects on a 9-point scale. The method of successive intervals was used to obtain the scale values of the statements. Normative data on the social desirability scale values of the 42 statements were obtained from Edwards (5).

Two different groups of Indian (N=110) and American (N=102) subjects were administered the full form of the EPPS and the probability of endorsement of each item in the set of 42 was computed.

Additional data were available on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), and Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale (MAS) for both the American (MMPI, N=96; MAS, N=106) and Indian Subjects (MMPI, N=70; MAS, N=110).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis I The product-moment correlation between social desirability scale values of the two linguistic groups (Hindi, N=37, Bengali, N=41) was .79. As the

probability was less than the .01 level the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis II — The product-moment correlation between social desirability scale values of the University of Vermont American sample (N=45) and the Indian sample (N=78) was .75, and that between Edwards normative data (N=152) and the Indian sample (N=78) was .73. Both the coefficients of correlation were significant at less than the .01 level. The hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis III — For each of the 42 EPPS items, the difference A - B, i.e. the difference in the frequency of selecting either A or B members of the AB pairs of statements was computed separately for the American (N=102) and Indian (N=110) samples. The product-moment correlation between the two samples was .43. As this was significant at less than the .01 level the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis IV — The correlation between social desirability scale values (N=45) and probability of endorsement (N=102) of the 42 statements for the American subjects (University of Vermont sample) was .12. As this was not significant at the .05 level the hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis V — The correlation between social desirability scale values (N=78) and probability of endorsement (N=110) of the 42 statements for Indian subjects was .28. It was not significant at the .05 level and the

hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis VI — For the American subjects the only significant positive correlation ($r=.28$, $N=93$; $p < .01$) was between the k-scale of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and need Intraception of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. There was no significant correlation ($\alpha = .01$) between the Manifest Anxiety Scale and the Personal Preference Schedule.

Hypothesis VII — For the Indian subjects the only significant positive correlation ($r=49$, $N=40$, $p < .01$) was between the k-scale of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and need Endurance of the Personal Preference Schedule. In addition the Manifest Anxiety Scale and need Succorance of the Personal Preference Schedule were positively correlated ($r=.35$, $N=89$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis VIII — The results of hypotheses VI and VII showed that the relationships between independent test measures of social desirability (k-scale of the MMPI and Taylor's MAS) and EPPS need variables were largely negligible both for American and Indian subjects.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The first two hypotheses were rejected, which showed that social desirability scale values of personality statements were positively and significantly related not only across two distinct linguistic regions of India but also across the American and Indian cultures. These results were consistent with those reported elsewhere, for example, in a Norwegian

and American comparison (9) and a American and Near East sample (8).

The rejection of hypothesis III shows that neither the American nor the Indian subjects had a systematic position preference for selecting either the A or B members of the AB pairs of EPPS items. Rather there was a small but positive and significant relationship between the over-all pattern of choices across the two cultures.

The hypotheses IV and V were <u>not</u> rejected as the relationship between the social desirability scale values and the probability of endorsement of personality statements was found to be negligible both in the American and the Indian sample. This suggests that objective personality tests of the EPPS type in which the influence of social desirability variable in response choices has been purposely controlled may hold promise for the objective cross-cultural study of personality.

The results of the hypotheses VI and VII were quite interesting. In this connection it will be recalled that Edwards considers Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale to be a measure of the tendency to give "socially undesirable responses" (3, p87) and the k-scale of the MMPI to be "a measure of the tendency to give socially desirable responses" (4, p23). Since the pairs of statements comprising the items of the EPPS were matched, as far as possible, with respect to their social desirability scale values, we would expect the correlations between the EPPS variables on the one hand, and the MAS and the k-scale on the other to be negligible. This was largely the case for both the American and Indian subjects. That this would be the case for American subjects is understandable as the EPPS was controlled for social desirability set for American subjects (4). However, the fact that the results with Indian subjects were not much different from those obtained with the American subjects, suggests that

conceptions of social desirability may not be as culture bound as has often been claimed.

In view of the negligible relationship between the social desirability variable and EPPS need variables for both the American and the Indian subjects it seems that need differences observed between American and Indian subjects on several of the EPPS variables (6,7) may well be considered as not being contaminated with the social desirability response set.

Finally two considerations emerge from the study. First, personality tests in which various response sets e.g. social desirability, acquiescence etc. have been purposely controlled may prove to be very useful in the objective cross-cultural study of personality. Secondly, the study of response sets across cultures may in itself provide interesting basic information about human personality.

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